

My EVER-CHANGING STUDIO

BY STACEY MAREE

My creative space is a place where my imagination comes to life, a space where I spend hours on end as my hands work tirelessly pouring my heart and soul into every piece. My studio is forever changing as I surround myself with things that inspire me, like items I've collected over the years from thrift shops, while traveling, or from nature. *It's important to surround myself with things I love in order to uplift and amplify my creative energy; after all, this is where the magic happens, where my imagination comes to life on paper.*

I've been creating since before I can remember, acquiring the nickname "Crafty" in preschool. My hands were always moving, always making or creating something. Being a self-taught artist, it wasn't until my artwork found its way into retail stores and showcases that I began to consider it as a serious career. I decided to take the leap into juggling a small creative business, selling and exhibiting my works, as well as working as a freelance graphic designer.

I grew up in a small beach town on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia. After moving interstate to Victoria, I currently reside in a 1940s art-deco apartment in a leafy green suburb of Melbourne. My studio is tucked away in a bay window of my home with large windows overlooking the trees outside. An easel I picked up secondhand is positioned in the corner, angled toward plenty of natural light, and is my preferred area for drawing. I find this is the sunniest room in the house to create in and for plants to thrive and flourish. ▸





You'll find mostly thrifted and upcycled items in my studio that I've collected over the years. A refurbished writer's desk and an old green kitchen cabinet hold upcycled glass jars full of pencils and paintbrushes. Shelves are full of crafting needs, including old wooden spools of lace, twine, jars of buttons, knitting needles, and crochet hooks. A vintage piano came with the house and displays old wine bottles and decanters that are full of dried flowers and candles. I love to make a space a home, reusing and recycling where I can.

As nature is my biggest source of inspiration, I like to bring the outside in. A large cactus garden atop an old metal trunk takes over the center of my studio. An

abundance of cacti and succulents are planted in odd bits of pottery, teacups, and once-loved terracotta pots found on the side of the road. Ivy hangs from the ceiling alongside my ever-growing collection of indoor plants, turning my home into somewhat of an urban jungle.

One minute the studio can be neat and tidy with everything put away in its own little home, and the next there will be prints scattered across the table, cardboard and packaging all over the floor, with curious kitties climbing all over it. I've had a few feline friends keep me company in the studio over the years, as I foster cats for the local animal shelter, and I'm currently caring for two beloved family cats.

A typical day in the studio starts with a cup of tea in the sunshine that streams through the bay window while I plan out my to-do list. My schedule changes day-by-day depending on what projects I am working on, whether packaging orders, working on commission pieces, or preparing for exhibitions and market stalls. I usually have two to five illustrations in progress at any one time, taking anywhere between two weeks to nine months to complete. I am constantly changing between pieces depending on how I'm feeling and which one I'm drawn to most.

I find that I'm most creative in the afternoon, when I'll put on a record (usually Fleetwood Mac) and sip tea as I draw in the natural light until the sun goes down. But the creating doesn't stop there. When I'm not drawing, I'm most likely making something in my downtime, whether crocheting, macramé, or sewing. I find it therapeutic to wind down after a busy day.

My practice is an exploration of delicate forms of flora and fauna with concepts that converge with the beauty of nature and growth over time. My works grow organically, changing and evolving as the piece progresses, much like the environment I'm capturing. I build up layers upon layers of pencil strokes, capturing wildwoods full of growth in a palette of earthy tones. I'm most intrigued by intricate details and minute life forms, and often focus on these details in order to bring a piece to life. >





WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM MY *Creative Life*

DO WHAT YOU LOVE

Follow your heart and be uniquely you. If you're passionate about it, then do it.

BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF

Things take time and a lot of hard work. Sometimes projects can take longer than expected, but progress is progress. Enjoy the journey.

MAINTAIN BALANCE

It can sometimes feel a little overwhelming being a one-girl band and doing everything yourself. It's important to take a step back and have a healthy work/life balance.

YOUR VIBE

Be authentic and honest. I drink excessive amounts of tea and listen to the same Fleetwood Mac album every day, and it never gets old! Do whatever works for you!

YOUR TRIBE

Surround yourself with people who lift you up and are just as passionate about your creations as you are. I always turn to my close friends and loved ones, and am so grateful for their support, without which I wouldn't be where I am today.

If I'm ever feeling a little uninspired in the studio, I go for a walk and get back to nature. I love the outdoors, whether it be heading to the beach, going for forest walks, or simply walking down to the local park that reminds me of my travels through Europe. I get lost soaking up all the details in the big oak trees, undergrowths of mushrooms, and busy bees flying from one flower bud to the other. I've always felt a strong connection to nature and hope its beauty is reflective in my work.

For more information about Stacey Maree's work and online store, please visit staceymaree.com, or visit her on Instagram (@staceymaree_art) for more about her studio and behind the scenes. She welcomes email at staceymaree@mail.com.

Photography by Stacey Maree.